

South Dakota National Guard

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September 26, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SD Guard hosts Native American cultural workshops

By Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota National Guard hosted two Native American cultural workshops to gain a better understanding of service members who come from Native American tribes and communities.

The SDNG hosted the workshop for 40 service members, in Sioux Falls, Sept. 18 and Rapid City Sept. 25, to educate them about the traditions and beliefs of Native American service members, who represent four percent of the South Dakota Guard,” said 1st Lt. Carstin Jerzak, state equal employment manager.

Dr. Craig Howe, founder and director of the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies and member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, introduced the class by instructing the attendees how to say “good morning” (Hihanni waste pronounced He-hawn-knee wash-day) in the Lakota language.

“I came to speak about the core principles of American Indian cultures, fundamentals of Lakota spirituality and the tribal sovereignty here in South Dakota,” said Howe.

Jerzak believes this type of workshop will provide current and future Native American service members the opportunity to talk about their heritage.

“This workshop allows us to interact in an environment where we can feel free to ask questions to overcome ignorance,” said Jerzak. “Learning about different cultures helps us overcome myths, stereotypes and old wives’ tales to get to the real aspect of their culture.”

Native American Staff Sgt. Chris Montileaux, believes a workshop instructed by an expert in Native American culture would be beneficial to participants in the SDNG Golden Coyote training exercise. The exercise provides service members with the opportunity to haul timber from the Black Hills National Forest to Native American reservations throughout South Dakota.

“This is the first time I have been offered a class about our own culture,” said Montileaux. “It was mentioned in the class that when we prepare to deploy we learn everything about the culture we are going to but nothing about the cultures within our city limits.” Teaching an in-depth class to the service members, who haul the timber to the reservations, on the history and traditions of Native Americans would enrich their experience, said Montileaux.

“We do the log hauls during annual training but do the Soldiers going to the reservations understand the culture other than we are bringing them logs for firewood?” said Montileaux. “Maybe they could go through a class like this prior to doing those missions.”

The SDNG Equal Employment Office and the Army Diversity Council are looking forward to doing more workshops in the future to include other cultures that service members belong to in the SDNG, said Jerzak.

“Spending the day learning more about someone’s culture helps everyone feel like they belong on a team, squad or platoon,” said Jerzak. “It also shows that we are an organization that is progressing toward solving issues to keep people serving in the Guard and for others who want to join.”

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High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard



140926-Z-CW157-001: Dr. Craig Howe, founder and director of the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, helps coach U.S. Army 1st Lt. Carstin Jerzak, South Dakota National Guard state equal employment manager, on how to say ‘I will see you again later’ in Lakota to Command Sgt. Major John Mallinger during a Native American cultural awareness workshop at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, S.D., Sept. 25, 2014. The intent of the workshop is gain a better understanding of Native American tribes, culture and communities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen/Released)



140926-Z-CW157-002: Dr. Craig Howe, founder and director of the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, talks about the nine reservations located in South Dakota during a Native American cultural awareness workshop at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, S.D., Sept. 25, 2014. The intent of the workshop is to gain a better understanding of Native American tribes, culture and communities. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen/Released)

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